

GOAL-A-GAME MERRICK SAVES WANDERERS' PRIDE

Casual Wycombe scramble home

Wycombe Wanderers 1, Dulwich Hamlet 0

FOLLOWING their two fine victories over Leytonstone and Hendon, Wycombe Wanderers bounced back to stark realism at Loakes Park on Saturday, when they scrambled to an undignified success over an average Dulwich Hamlet side, still seeking their first win of the 1968-69 campaign.

Wanderers' approach to this game was largely based on the psychological knowledge that having defeated two of the top Isthmian clubs, Dulwich Hamlet would not dare to stand between them and their eighth point of the season. Unfortunately, Dulwich did not agree with this diagnosis.

The Hamlet, who have already been crushed 8-0 by Enfield, tackled tenaciously, covered tightly and were certainly in no mood to capitulate without a fight.

Admittedly, they offered very scarce danger to John Maskell's goal, but easily contained the Wycombe forwards who moved with an air of nonchalance about their work, more or less hinting that given time the goals would start to flow.

BOTTOM GEAR

But Dulwich's defenders were not prepared to allow the Wanderers' time and it became increasingly obvious that Wycombe, who had started in bottom gear, were finding it extremely difficult to engage top. The tempo of the game was rather pedestrian and this certainly suited Dulwich.

As the home team the onus was on Wycombe to apply the pressure and increase the tempo, but their build-up from defence to attack was often muddled and far too casual. Against the lesser sides in the Isthmian League, Wanderers have always shown this lenient tendency and very often it has cost them precious points.

Territorially Wanderers' were well in command but once inside the 18-yard box their finishing became slip-shod. Horseman was particularly at fault on one occasion when after some attractive approach work he placed his shot wide from three yards.

There was little evidence of the crisp inter-passing movements which had unsettled Hendon, with the result that the team were often playing as 11 individuals.

Len Worley was in one of his most annoying moods, seeming to take no interest in the proceedings although he did whip over one cross, shortly before the break, which found Horseman's head and brought a flying save from Butler.

Very little was seen of Dulwich as an attacking force and it is perhaps even more disturbing that when Wanderers are so clearly the dominating team they appear to lack a "killer instinct" in their play to ram home their advantage.

It is typical of Worley, when everything is not going to plan, that he should have a part in the deciding goal which relieved the agony for the suffering supporters in the 69th minute.

FLOORED

The winger was unceremoniously floored by Hamlet's left-back Booth, who was booked seconds later for refusing to stand the required ten yards away from the kick.

Worley floated over a dangerous free-kick to the far left-hand post and while Horseman and Samuels miss-timed their jumps Merrick rose above the defence to squeeze the ball in, to continue his record of having scored in every league game this season.

One could almost see the relief spread across the Wycombe players' faces and for the first time in the match confidence began to show in their play.

Although they were not to break through again, Wycombe went close on two occasions when Gale saw his astute lob headed off the line by Booth straight to Worley, whose fierce half-volley was bravely headed over the top by Firman.

Wycombe Wanderers: J. Maskell; I. Rundle, J. Lailey, V. Faulkner, C. Gale; B. Baker, D. Thomas; L. Worley, K. Samuels, A. Horseman, L. Merrick. Sub: L. Temel.

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WYCOMBE MADE hard work of a game they expected to be easy against the lowly placed Dulwich Hamlet.

They dictated play, but missed four simple chances in the first half and the goal that gave them the points did not arrive until 15 minutes before the end.

The scorer was Merrick who smacked home a free kick from Worley.